

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ADS-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 INC-01 SP-02 SS-15  
ICA-11 IO-14 HA-05 TRSE-00 OMB-01 AID-05 SVC-00  
/092 W

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P 071031Z SEP 79

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9124

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MANILA 17379

E.O. 12065: GDS 9/7/85 (MALIN, HERBERT S.) OR-P

TAGS: PINT, RP

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION AND MARCOS TRADE SALVOS

1. (C - ENTIRE TEXT).

2. SUMMARY: THE POLITICAL OPPOSITION USED THE OCCASION OF A TESTIMONIAL DINNER AUGUST 30 FOR ONE OF THE PHILIPPINES' SENIOR STATESMEN TO AIR ITS GRIEVANCES AGAINST MARTIAL LAW AND THE MARCOS GOVERNMENT BEFORE MRS. MARCOS, WHO WAS PRESENT. A SHARPLY CRITICAL SPEECH BY FORMER SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE JOSE LAUREL, JR., WAS PARTICULARLY PROVOCATIVE. ALTHOUGH MRS. MARCOS APPEARED TO TAKE THE OCCASION IN HER STRIDE, THE PRESIDENT OBVIOUSLY DECIDED HE COULD NOT AFFORD TO ALLOW THE CHALLENGE TO PASS UNANSWERED. HIS RESPONSE, IN A SPEECH TO MILITARY OFFICERS TWO DAYS LATER, WARNED THE OPPOSITION NOT TO TRY HIS PATIENCE AND THREATENED THE ELIMINATION OF THE LAST VESTIGES OF THE OLD SOCIETY. THE EXCHANGE HAS ALL MANILA TALKING, BUT IT IS TOO EARLY TO CONCLUDE THAT EITHER SIDE IS ANXIOUS TO BRING ON A GENUINE CONFRONTATION. END SUMMARY.

3. A TESTIMONIAL BIRTHDAY BANQUET HELD AUGUST 30 IN HONOR OF BANKER GIL PUYAT PROVIDED THE TRADITIONAL POLITI-  
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CAL OPPOSITION WITH AN OPPORTUNITY FOR DIRECT CONFRONTATION WITH THE MARTIAL LAW GOVERNMENT, AS PERSONIFIED BY FIRST LADY IMELDA MARCOS. PUYAT, A SENIOR STATESMAN WHO WAS PRESIDENT OF THE SENATE UNTIL MARTIAL LAW WAS DECLARED IN 1972, BUT WHO HAS NOT PLAYED A POLITICAL ROLE SINCE THEN, DOES NOT APPEAR HIMSELF TO HAVE BEEN THE INSTIGATOR OF THE CONFRONTATION AND PROBABLY WAS SLIGHTLY EMBARRASSED BY IT

ALL. AMONG HIS FRIENDS WHO ORGANIZED THE BANQUET, HOWEVER, WERE MANY OF THE LEADING PRE-1972 POLITICIANS WHO HAVE EITHER ALWAYS BEEN OPPOSED TO FERDINAND MARCOS OR WHO SEEK THE LIFTING OF MARTIAL LAW. TO THEM THE BANQUET IN THE HISTORIC MANILA HOTEL PROVIDED AN IDEAL OCCASION TO AIR THEIR GRIEVANCES.

4. SEVERAL HUNDRED PERSONS ATTENDED--BUSINESSMEN; POLITICIANS; CARDINAL SIN; SUPREME COURT JUSTICE TEEHANKEE; A SMATTERING OF MARCOS GOVERNMENT PEOPLE, INCLUDING MINISTER OF TOURISM ASPIRAS, WHO WAS ONE OF THE SPEAKERS, AND ASSEMBLYMAN SALVADOR LAUREL, WHO SERVED AS MASTER OF CEREMONIES; AND THE WIFE OF THE LONG INCARCERATED FORMER SENATOR BENIGNO AQUINO. PRESIDENT MARCOS WAS INVITED, BUT DECLINED. THE FIRST LADY ACCEPTED, CONFERRED A DECORATION ON PUYAT FOR A LIFETIME OF MERITORIOUS SERVICE TO THE COUNTRY, AND REMAINED FOR THE ENTIRE EVENING. THE STAGE WAS THUS SET.

5. THE AFFAIR LASTED SIX HOURS. ONE AFTER ANOTHER, THE SPEAKERS MADE THEIR WAY TO THE PODIUM, (#) LISTEN TO VARIOUS REMARKS CRITICAL OF MARTIAL )-2, OF CORRUPTION IN HIGH PLACES, AND OF THE LEADERSHIP ITSELF. MOST OF THE SPEECHES WERE POLITELY PHRASED. THE CARDINAL OFFERED ONLY A BRIEF TESTIMONIAL. JUSTICE TEEHANKEE'S REMARKS WERE EVEN-HANDED. PUYAT CONDEMNED  
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DICTATORSHIP, BUT IN GENERAL TERMS. MRS. AQUINO READ A LETTER FROM HER HUSBAND, WRITTEN IN JAIL FOR THE OCCASION, CALLING ON HIS GENERATION NOT TO LET THE 1970'S "BE REMEMBERED AS A DECADE OF DECADENCE, COWARDICE, ESCAPISM, AND INSULATION FROM REALITIES."

6. IT WAS LEFT TO FORMER SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE JOSE LAUREL, JR., TO LAUNCH WHAT ONE OPPOSITION MEMBER DESCRIBED AS THE "DIRECT HIT." LAUREL, A MEMBER OF MARCOS' OWN NATIONALIST PARTY IN PRE-MARTIAL LAW DAYS AND THE SON OF A FORMER PHILIPPINE PRESIDENT, HAS NOT BEEN ACTIVE RECENTLY IN POLITICS, BECAUSE OF HIS OPPOSITION TO MARTIAL LAW. SPEAKING FROM A PREPARED TEXT, LAUREL QUICKLY TRANSFORMED HIS TESTIMONIAL INTO AN EXPLANATION WHY PATRIOTS LIKE SENATOR PUYAT WERE UNWILLING TO SERVE IN A MARTIAL LAW GOVERNMENT, LACKING THE "GUARANTY OF INALIENABLE AND INDISPENSABLE RIGHTS AND RIGHTEOUSNESS IN LEADERSHIP."

7. LAUREL RECALLED HIS OWN RESPONSIBILITY FOR BRINGING MARCOS INTO THE NATIONALIST PARTY AND FOR HIS SUBSEQUENT NOMINATION AS PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE. HE SCOFFED AT JUSTIFICATIONS OF MARTIAL LAW AS A MEANS OF PROTECTING THE

NATIONAL SECURITY AGAINST SUBVERSION AND CALLED UPON MARCOS TO TERMINATE MARTIAL RULE, TO RESTORE LOST LIBERTIES, AND TO CALL FOR "FREE, ORDERLY, AND HONEST ELECTIONS." THIS, HE SAID, WOULD BE A FITTING BIRTHDAY GIFT FOR PUYAT AND ALL FREEDOM-LOVING FILIPINOS. THIS WOULD BE THE "REDEEMING LIGHT IN A LAND OF PERPETUAL EVENING, WHERE ONLY MALACANANG IS AGLITTER AND THE REST OF THE COUNTRY IS IN DARKNESS\*"

8. MRS. MARCOS IS REPORTED TO HAVE TAKEN IT ALL WITH DIGNITY AND WITHOUT NOTICEABLE IRRITATION. ONLY WHEN PASSING LAUREL ON HER WAY OUT WAS SHE HEARD TO SAY IN TAGALOG, "I SHALL REPORT YOU." CHATTING SOME DAYS LATER WITH THE AMBASSADOR, SHE APPEARED AMUSED BY THE AFFAIR, WHICH "HAD A CERTAIN THEATRICAL QUALITY." SHE WAS WARNED IN ADVANCE  
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BY LAUREL'S BROTHER OF THE NATURE OF THE OCCASION AND ADVISED NOT TO ATTEND. SHE THEREFORE KNEW WHAT TO EXPECT,

NOTE BY OC/T: (#) OMISSION. CORRECTION TO FOLLOW.

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EXCEPT FOR THE LAST-MINUTE DECISION OF MRS. AQUINO TO ATTEND. SHE FOUND THE SPEECHES "UNEXCITING, NOT EARTHY ENOUGH, LACKING IN FIRE AND CREDIBILITY, BECAUSE THE SPEAKERS WERE ALL RICH." MOST IMPORTANT IN HER VIEW, "THE AUDIENCE REMAINED UNCONVINCED, BECAUSE THE OPPOSITION SAID NOTHING ABOUT THE EXTERNAL FACTORS AFFECTING THE ECONOMIC

SITUATION IN THE PHILIPPINES."

9. AS LATER EVENTS SHOWED, PRESIDENT MARCOS WAS NOT AMUSED. ON SEPTEMBER 1, MARCOS TOOK THE OCCASION OF A SPEECH BEFORE ARMY RESERVE OFFICERS TO ISSUE A SHARP WARNING TO OPPOSITION ELEMENTS TO TONE DOWN THEIR ATTACKS AGAINST THE NEW SOCIETY. ADDRESSING HIS REMARKS TO THOSE "WHO UTILIZE THE PRIVILEGES EXTENDED BY THIS ADMINISTRATION AS A WEAPON AGAINST THE NEW SOCIETY TO UNDERMINE THE REPUBLIC OF THE PHILIPPINES," HE CAUTIONED, "DO NOT TEST YOUR LUCK AND DO NOT TRY OUR PATIENCE."

10. MARCOS ACKNOWLEDGED THAT HE WAS LATE IN ACHIEVING THE OBJECTIVE OF "ELIMINATING VESTIGES OF THE OLD SOCIETY," AND STATED HIS RESOLVE TO ATTEND TO IT IMMEDIATELY. TO THOSE WHO, "NOT HAVING FELT ANY WOUND, NOW START TO JEST AT THE SCARS," HE CHALLENGED, "IF THEY REALLY SEEK BATTLE, LET THEM DO SO NOW." AT THE SAME TIME, HE OFFERED TO SIT DOWN AND TALK WITH THOSE WHO SINCERELY BELIEVE THERE ARE CONFIDENTIAL

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OTHER WAYS TO ATTAIN A BETTER PHILIPPINES.

11. COMMENT: THE BANQUET AND MARCOS' FIRM WORDS IN RESPONSE HAVE BECOME THE MAJOR TOPIC OF DISCUSSION IN MANILA. OPPOSITION CIRCLES TEND TO DISCOUNT MARCOS' WARNINGS, ALTHOUGH THEY ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THIS WAS HIS SHARPEST OUTBURST IN RECENT YEARS. THEY SEE MARCOS' REACTION AS IRRITATION OVER THE FACT THAT HIS WIFE WAS PUT IN AN UNPLEASANT SITUATION. THEY SEE IT AS AN ON-THE-SPOT REACTION AND DO NOT BELIEVE THAT MARCOS HAD IN MIND OTHER RECENT OPPOSITION SPEECHES AND PUBLICATIONS CRITICAL OF MARCOS AND HIS GOVERNMENT AS WELL. (MAYBE SO, BUT EMBASSY HAS OTHER EVIDENCE OF MALACANANG DISPLEASURE WITH, AND HINTS OF ECONOMIC REPRISAL AGAINST, LIBERAL PARTY LEADER GERARDO ROXAS, WHO HAS ALSO BEGUN TO SPEAK OUT LATELY.) WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE PUYAT DINNER BY THE AMBASSADOR, MARCOS WAS GUARDED IN HIS REACTION, ALTHOUGH HE SMILINGLY POOH-POOHED AN ATTEMPT BY ONE WESTERN JOURNALIST TO LINK HIS WARNING WITH A CALL IN THE SAME SPEECH FOR THE CREATION OF A 900,000 MAN CITIZENS' ARMY, WITH BATTALIONS IN EVERY PROVINCE TO DEAL WITH SUBVERSIVE ELEMENTS. OPPOSITION FIGURES DREW THIS SAME LINKAGE, BUT VIEWED IT AS MARCOS' SYMBOLIC WAY OF REMINDING THEM THAT THEY STAND ALONE, WHILE AS FORMER SENATOR SALONGA COMMENTED TO US, "THE PRESIDENT STANDS WITH THE ENTIRE PHILIPPINE ARMED FORCES, AND THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION, BEHIND HIM."

12. IN ONE WAY, THE LAUREL SPEECH DOES CONSTITUTE A TURNING POINT, IN THAT LAUREL IS NOT NORMALLY IDENTIFIED WITH

THE OPPOSITION. ON THE CONTRARY, MARCOS HAS ALWAYS FELT A SPECIAL DEBT TO THE LAUREL FAMILY. IT WAS LAUREL'S FATHER AFTER ALL WHO SUCCESSFULLY DEFENDED THE YOUNG MARCOS IN THE COURTS AGAINST A MURDER CHARGE JUST PRIOR TO THE CONFIDENTIAL

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JAPANESE ATTACK, AND WHATEVER HIS FAULTS, MARCOS IS NOT ONE TO FORGET A DEBT. IT REMAINS TO BE SEEN WHETHER THE INCIDENT REPRESENTS ONLY A BRIEF FLURRY, A CAUSE FOR SERIOUS REFLECTION ON MARCOS' PART ABOUT THE STATE OF THE NATION, OR A JUSTIFICATION FOR HIM TO SETTLE OLD POLITICAL SCORES WITH SOME OF THOSE WHO SHARE LAUREL'S VIEWS. FILIPINOS WILL SEE IN FRIDAY'S NEWS THAT FORMER PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL IS UNDER INVESTIGATION, AND REPORTEDLY CHARGED BY THE JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL WITH "RUMORMONGERING," AS A DIRECT RESULT OF TOO RICH A DINNER (SEPTEL). MURPHY

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## Message Attributes

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